VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Commissioner's Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention Advisory Council
1311 U. S. Route 302 – Berlin, Barre, VT 05641
August 31, 2012

MINUTES

PRESENT

Council Members: Saben Littlefield, Ken Page, Kim Brittenham, Lucie Garand, Charles Johnson, Mill Moore, Nicole Mace, Barbara Crippen, Robert Appel, Griffin Thomas (via LNV), Lexie Federhen (via LNV), Henri Sparks, Jeff Fannon, Jeff Francis, Kathy Johnson, Tracey Tsugawa, Armando Vilaseca.

DOE: Jay Ramsey, David Kelley, Helen Lamberton, Maureen Gaidys

Other Guests: Zach McLaughlin, Assistant Superintendent, Springfield; Donna Mullin, Susan McKelvie, Principal, Brookfield School; Don Morrill, VSBIT; Peter Bauer; Jenny Day, Fox News

WELCOME

Commissioner Vilaseca welcomed the group and thanked everyone for their participation. He shared his goal of bringing this group together to offer support and guidance to schools so that they are better able to provide a healthier learning environment for all students. This is a serious issue in our society and the learning process can be significantly impeded if students are denied a safe learning environment. He asked the group to consider not only what we can do in the present moment to help schools reduce the incidences of bullying and harassment, but also to consider what can be done in the long-term to change these behaviors. Cyber bullying is another challenge facing schools. It is an easier way to bully, is much more pervasive, and presents additional issues when it occurs after school hours and off school property. Commissioner Vilaseca noted that we have an increasingly diverse student body in Vermont and now more than ever, we need to make sure all students feel safe and valued.

Commissioner Vilaseca acknowledged Tracey Tsugawa, Advisory Council Chair, and expressed that he is looking forward to her leadership and the collective leadership of the council, to address the ever-pressing issues of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying. He also stated that he was very pleased to have two students participating in this council and that he believes they are a very important part of the process and he values their input.

BRAINSTORM SESSION

After introductions of guests and council members, Tracey asked the group to break into pairs and brainstorm possible topics for the council to focus on and specific work products that would be helpful for schools. The asterisk indicates the idea was mentioned more than once.

- Policy/funds for training for non-teaching staff in schools*
- Student input during trainings
- Policy about protecting the identities of targets
- Developing support systems for targets, perpetrators*
- Preventive work to identify and respond to behaviors before they turn into bullying and harassment
- Create a guide (similar to the State of Maine's) on best practices
- Create a mentorship program to support younger students with student input
- Involve parents and educate parents*
- Improve data collection (model polices require documentation)
- Make sure students and staff understand the differences between bullying and harassment*
- Create teams in schools to address the dysfunctional relationships between educators
- Create a 3-4 step process to give to schools on responding to bullying and harassment
- Create clear supervision plans
- Identify myths about bullying and harassment in Vermont
- Create consistency across ESAs in terms of professional development work
- Identify and assess programs to recommend to schools to address bullying and harassment
- Training for all school staff on how to respond to incidents
- Foster more understanding in schools and communities about bullying and harassment
- Build confidence in responders
- Work on kindness and respect with children and adults
- Use technology for training
- Address bullying and harassment in the context of life-long learning, in the on-going curriculum
- Use data to highlight the needs in schools (especially for those who may not think they have any issues)
- Create consistency in investigations and follow-up statewide – provide training for all staff and external organizations (e.g., youth programs)
- Create a safe environment for reporting, including anonymous or confidential processes
- Respond with urgency to reported incidents
- Create systems of student leadership in schools
- Create a safe context for storytelling as a way to understand differences
- Create clear expectations of students in working with adults to address these issues
- Training on safe and responsible use of technology and the internet
- Pre-service training for educators
- Student input on what is and is not effective in schools
- Discussion about effective consequences (other than suspensions)

Issues/Topics distilled from the brainstorm list:

1) Data Collection and Usage
2) Training: Pre-service and In-service
3) Policies and Procedures
4) Effective consequences for perpetrators (discipline and addressing behaviors)
5) School Culture (school staff, students, parents, community)
6) Effective Intervention Strategies
7) Support Systems for Targets (and Perpetrators)
8) Curriculum Resources
9) Student Leadership and Peer Role Models
10) Community Engagement/Resources
11) Defining a set of Core Values
12) Adult Leadership
13) Accountability Methods for Schools
14) Positive and Negative Use of Social Media
15) Off-campus Issues

Council members identified the top three priorities for the council for the next six to nine months. Based on council member votes, the council chose the following top three priorities:

TRAINING
STUDENT LEADERSHIP
DATA COLLECTION

NEXT MEETING
The next council meeting will take place on October 24th from 1:00PM – 4:00 PM at the Howard Dean Center in Springfield, VT. The council hopes to meet every other month at various schools throughout the state.